

A
DISCOURSE

Against

Blasphemy.

Being a Conference with

M. S.

CONCERNING

1. The Rudeness of Atheistical Discourse.
2. The Certainty and Eternity of Hell-Torments.
3. The Truth and Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

Published

Pursuant to their Majesties Injunctions)

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Atheism and Irreligion.

The Third Impression.

By William Affheton, D. D.

Chaplain to His Grace the
Duke of Ormond.

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*Z. Isham, R. P. I
Hen. Episc. Lon
a Sacris.*

to the Illustrious His Grace James
Duke of Ormond, &c.

May it please Your Grace,

I O permit Your Obliged Chaplain to
publish this following Treatise under
Your Grace's Name. The Design of which,
in Humility, is to vindicate the Great
Majesty of Heaven, from the Malitious
Reflections of a Blasphemous Tongue.

If the Person concerned in these Papers
had not confessed, upon Demand, That
there is a God; I should then have judg'd
by the rest of his Discourse, that he
was a down-right Atheist. And ought
to have treated him as such, and not
in the milder Name of Deist.

But whether Deist or Atheist his Ex-
pressions were so extravagant, That I did
not think to have return'd him no An-
swer. It being neither prudent nor safe
to cast Pearls before Swine. And per-
haps such Barboes as these are best An-
swer'd with Silence. Who deserve a sharp
Confutation then can be given them
in the Pen. But when I remember'd
the advice of Solomon; Answer a Fool
according to his folly, lest he be wise
in his own Conceit. And did likewise
observe, how this Hector of Satan re-
volved his Rambles in the Neighbour-
hood of my Parish. And with what Scorn
he treated my Profession, with a Come-
son convince me if you can. I then

The Epistle Dedicatory.

thought it my Duty, to magnifie mi
Office, by pleading the Cause of m.
Great Master, against the taunting R
proaches of this insulting Sennacherie.

If what I have here writ may be i
any measure useful to the Cause of R
ligion, I do chearfully Publish it unde
Your Grace's Patronage. And when
have first Declar'd ; That I perfect
hate Flattery; And am either too Prou
or too Honest to be guilty of such mean
ness ; I will then take the Freedom
tell the World, how highly I Honour You
Grace's Worth and Vertues. And what
Satisfaction it is to all true Lovers
the House of Ormond to observe the Bu
ding Hopes of Your Grace's Greatness.

'Tis an Argument of a truly great an
generous Mind, to bear Adversity wit
Patience. And tho 'tis much hope
through Gods Blessing upon His Maj
sties Arms, Your Grace's Affairs will i
a short time, be in a better Posture ; y
possibly few Persons, of Your Grace's k
gure, would have born some Passag
with such Decency as You have done.

But when I remember the generou
Examples of your Illustrious Grand-F
ther and Heroic Father, 'tis but w
was expected from Your Grace.
Greatness seems to be entailed u
Your Family. And that Your Gra
may live to equal the Worth
Greatness of Your Ancestors, is
Prayer of,

My Lord,

Your Grace's Chaplain in all Du
ful Observance W. Assheton

T O
M. S.

SIR,

I Have just cause even as a *Christian*, but much more as a *Church-man*, to express my Resentments against your late Discourse. Those Atheistical Harangues against the Majesty of God and his Providence; the Immortality of the Soul, Rewards and Punishments in another World; particularly, against the Certainty and Eternity of Hell Torments; were doubtless to be rejected with the highest Indignation. And I am so far from condemning my self, as guilty of an unnecessary Zeal in so doing; that I rather judge it my Duty, to confirm and enlarge the *Admonitions* I then gave you.

I will not exasperate by a minute repetition of your extravagant

vagant Expressions (for indeed they are not fit to be repeated) but shall in Charity to your self and others of your Complexion desire you briefly to consider these *Two Things*.

I. The *Rudeness*. II. The *Danger* of such Discourses.

From the former of these Topics, let me advise you to polish your Conversation; and to behave your self, at least as a *Gentleman*, if not as a *Christian*. For pray, Sir, consider; How ungentile it is, to disturb innocent Mirth, and ingenious Society with such exasperating Digressions.

'Tis, you know, an unfortunate mistake to affront any Person in the presence of his Friend. And upon such intimation given (even out of respect to the Company) the most inveterate malice is usually silenc'd.

You will likewise acknowledge, he must needs be a Man of a very cold Constitution, who can sit tame and unconcerned, whilst his *Prince*,
his

his *Parent*, his *Patron* and *Benefactor* shall be reviled and aspersed.

If the *King* shall be Libelled and Reproached, his *Person* Ridiculed, his *Title* disputed, his *Government* traduced as Tyrannical and Unjust: An honest, loyal Subject will not barely reprove such a railing *Shimei*, with a *Curse* not the *Lords Anointed*, but according to his Allegiance, he will bring the Rebel to a sharper Account.

A Dutiful *Child* will, beyond all Patience, be provoked; to hear his *Father* treated as a Villain and a Rascal. And a faithful *Servant*, on such occasion, will equally be moved for the Credit of his *Master*.

Now is God only Friendless? Is no Man think you concerned, for the Honour and Glory of so great a Majesty? When Blasphemous Mouths shall revile his *Nature*; Burlesque his *Laws*; Despise his *Promises*; Contemn his *Threatnings*; Laugh at his *Terrors*; Do
you

you think such Enlargement as this, can be welcome or accepted in a Christian Society? If you fancy that it will, let me then convince you of your mistake, whilst I thus briefly inform you, what apprehensions we *Christians* have of Almighty God.

We Believe; That there is One Supream *Being*, not only infinitely *Great* and Powerful, but also infinitely *Good*, Benign and Gracious. That as he made all Things by his *Power*, so he governs them by his *Providence*. That he hath a more peculiar regard to his Creature *Man*, whom he hath endowed with Perfections beyond other *Beings*. That he hath not only provided all suitable Accommodations for *this* Life (in which we continually depend on his Care and Bounty) but also hath made us capable of a *better*. That when we *Die*, we do not perish as the *Brutes*, but have *Souls* immortal, which shall never cease to be. That he hath
pro-

provided a Happiness for these Souls (yea and our Bodies also, which shall rise again and be united to them) infinitely beyond our present apprehensions. That unspeakable Joys are prepared for those that *love God, i. e. who* are obedient to his Commands. As for those who shall finally reject his Precepts, and stupidly follow their own brutish Inclinations, there is a sad Eternity expects them in the other World.

But our comfort is, God made us to be happy; and if We are not so, it is certainly our own faults. For he shews us our Danger, and instructs us how to avoid it. He expostulates with us, *why we will Dye and Perish?* And we may be confident, since God is Truth it self, he is very sincere in those Expostulations. And as the highest Evidence of all this, He sent his Son into the World, not only to instruct us, and to be an Example of holy Life, but also to *Dye* for us, and to reconcile us to himself.

Now, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all Things ?*

In Sum, God is the most *Indulgent Father*, the most bountiful *Benefactor*, and the surest *Friend*, He hath promised (and he is able to do it) to defend us in all *Dangers* ; to relieve us in all our *Wants* ; to direct us in all our *Doubts*. Finally, *He will guide us by his Counsel here, And, if we follow his Conduct, will at last bring us to his Glory.*

Such Apprehensions as these all good Christians have of God. From whence, pray, do you judge, how unpleasant it must be to Persons thus perswaded, to hear such an excellent Being *Despised* ; So great a Majesty *Prophaned* ; and such infinite Goodness *Abused*.

And therefore since Men are impatient to hear that *contemned*, which they value and admire ; Or to be told that is *false*, which they firmly believe to be true ; Do not
turn

turn Conversation into Brawls and Quarrels. At least be so modest as not to affront the common Sense of Mankind. But if you will not Worship God your self, yet at least be so civil as not to *Laugh* at those that shall.

And that I may convince you, what little Cause there is to be so pleasant on such Occasions; I must desire you further to consider, Not only the *Rudeness*, but also,

II. The *Danger* of such Discourses.

And here I may rationally suppose, you have so much Love for your self, that you dread the Thoughts of being Eternally miserable. And I appeal to your own Experience, if the serious Apprehension even of the Possibility of such Torments, like *Belshazzar's* Hand upon the Wall, hath not *loosned your Joyns*; perplext your Thoughts, and damp't your Pleasures?

And therefore, since a mistake in this matter is like to prove so fatal, you ought to be well assured

what you do, and upon what Grounds you do proceed.

For it is not sufficient Security in this Case to affirm [*Perhaps there is no Life after this; And, 'Tis probable there is no Account to be given in another World. And you are not able to understand, how there should be such a Hell, such a Place of Torments, &c.*] I say, this is not sufficient. But if you will proceed with Reason, you must then further Demonstrate; That it is plainly impossible, and a flat Contradiction that such Things should be. Unless therefore you can prove this Proposition; *It is impossible there should be any future Account; Any Torments in another World,* you do not act upon Prudential Grounds, nor shew your self Master of such exalted Reason, as you commonly pretend to.

'Tis a known Rule, which all Wise Men will observe, *Provide for the Worst.* And therefore tho it should be granted to be highly improbable, Or (as you are pleased to

to Phrase it) *A very unlikely matter*, that there should be a *Hell*, or a State of such dismal Torments, yet unless you can further prove, That it is utterly *Impossible*, you are obliged in *Prudence* to provide for the worst. Even to amend your Life, and to reform those Practices, which, if there be a *Hell*, will most certainly bring you thither.

I must confess you have a very difficult Task, whilst you attempt to prove a *Negative*. But if you will be trying of your skill, I'll shew you the Method in which you must proceed.

Whoever shall undertake so extravagant a Design as to prove there is no *Hell*, He must *First* consider those Grounds and Reasons, upon which all good Christians do believe it, and he must then shew those Grounds to be *Impossible*, and to imply a Contradiction; or else he trifles and deceives his own Soul.

Now if any one should ask me,

A 5

Why

Why I Believe a Hell? [*Did I ever see any of that Infernal Region? Did I ever converse with those Damned Spirits? Did they ever tell me there is such a dismal Place?*]

I Answer, No. But I therefore believe it, *Because God, who is infallibly True, hath plainly Declared it.* If it further shall be Demanded, [*How am I assured that God hath thus Declared?*]

I Answer, Because the *Holy Scriptures* which contain the mind of God, and in which the surest Notices of another World are to be found; I say, These *Scriptures* do in plain Terms inform me, *That there is such a Hell, Therefore I Believe it.*

So that this Truth, *There is a Hell, and the Torments of it are Eternal,* is proved and supported by these following Propositions.

1. *God hath Revealed his Will to Mankind.*

2. *These Books we call the Holy Scriptures contain this Revelation of the Divine Will.*

3. *This*

3. *This Truth, That there is a Hell, and that the Torments of it are Eternal, is fully Revealed in these Holy Scriptures.*

4. *What God hath Revealed in these Holy Scriptures is Infallibly True.*

And consequently; Whoever will pretend to prove it Impossible, *That there is such a State of Eternal Torments*, He must make good these Propositions.

1. *That it is Impossible, that Almighty God should reveal his Will to Mankind.* Or else,

2. If the Possibility of such Revelation shall be granted; he must then prove, *That it is Impossible, that these Books we call the Scriptures should contain this Revelation of the Divine Will.* Or,

3. If both the former shall be acknowledg'd; He must then prove it Impossible, *That such a Doctrine concerning the Eternity of Hell-Torments should be revealed in Scripture.* Or else,

4. He must make it appear, *That what God hath thus Revealed cannot possibly be true.* A

As to the First ;

Divine Revelation is so far from being Impossible, that it hath the highest Probabilities to support it.

You have already granted, *There is a God.* And I am sure, upon due Consideration you will further grant ; That God is a *Rational Intellectual Being ; A free Agent, having Liberty of Choice to determine his own Actions.* And consequently, what should hinder, but that such a God may communicate his Designs and Intentions to Mankind ?

Men you know do frequently discover, not only what they resolve at *present*, but also their *Apprehensions de futuro*, what they purpose to perform hereafter. And this faculty is acknowledged a great perfection in human Nature, such as other Creatures are not capable of. Why then will you deny that Capacity to so excellent a Being as an infinite God, which

which yet you will grant to a limited and finite Creature?

And this expostulation will appear the more rational, when I have further told you; That if you deny the *Possibility* of Divine Revelation, you have then the *Suffrage* of all the World against you. All Nations and all Religions, *Jewish*, *Heathen*, *Mahometan* as well as *Christian* do acknowledge and suppose it.

If still You can doubt of so clear a Truth, *Tully* in his Books *de Divinatione* may then convince you. His *Authority* I shall not urge (for the Authority of God himself is rejected by you) but it is his Reason only I desire you to observe.

S*l sunt Dii, neque ante declarant hominibus quæ futura sunt : Aut non dilligunt homines : Aut quid eventurum sit ignorant : Aut existimant nihil interesse hominum scire quid futurum sit : Aut non censent esse suæ Majestatis præsignificare hominibus quæ sunt futura : Aut ea ne ipsi quidem Dii significare possunt.*

possunt. At neque non diligunt nos :
 Sunt enim benefici, generique homi-
 num amici : Neque ignorant ea quæ
 ab ipsis constituta & designata sunt :
 Neque nostra nihil interest scire ea,
 quæ eventura sunt : Erimus enim
 cautiore si sciemus : Neque hoc a-
 lienum ducunt Majestate suâ : Ni-
 hil est enim beneficentiâ præstantius ;
 Neque non possunt futura prænosce-
 re : Non igitur & sunt Dii, nec sig-
 nificant futura. V. Cicer : *De Di-*
vin. Pag. 269. Edit. du Puis.
 Lut. 1565. Fol.

Thus that excellent *Philosopher*
 argues, in the Person of a *Stoic*.
 The Sense of whose words, I shall
 thus faithfully give you in this
 following *Paraphrase*.

‘ If there be a *God*, and yet this
 ‘ *God* doth not reveal his Will to
 ‘ Mankind : If he hath made no
 ‘ Discovery of a future State ; nor
 ‘ given us any notice of Rewards
 ‘ and Punishments in another
 ‘ World. *Then*, Some of these fol-
 ‘ lowing Particulars must be asser-
 ‘ ted by us. Either. 1st. That
 ‘ *God*

' God hath no Love nor Concern
 ' for Mankind ; Or else, 2^{ly}.
 ' That God himself is ignorant of
 ' future Events ; Or 3^{ly}. That
 ' God apprehends it will be of no
 ' advantage to us, to know what
 ' may possibly befall us : Or else,
 ' 4^{thly}. That it is a Diminution
 ' of his *State* and *Majesty*, to Com-
 ' municate his Intentions to Man-
 ' kind. Or else *Lastly*, If there
 ' be a future State, *Then*, That
 ' God himself is not able to De-
 ' clare it.

' But none of these Things can
 ' be affirmed.

' Not the *First* ; For God truly
 ' Loves us, and is very indulgent
 ' and beneficial to Mankind. Nor
 ' 2^{ly} ; Can God be ignorant of
 ' future Events, because they are
 ' appointed and determined by
 ' him. Nor 3^{ly} ; Can it be pre-
 ' tended, that the notices of a fu-
 ' ture State will be of no advan-
 ' tage to us : Since this very ap-
 ' prehension that we must render
 ' an Account of all our Actions,
 ' will

' will make us more cautious ; not
 ' to live at random ; but to take
 ' heed what we do. And there-
 ' fore 4thly. It is far from being
 ' repugnant to the Majesty of
 ' God to reveal his Intentions ;
 ' since nothing is more generous
 ' then Bounty and doing Good.
 ' And *Lastly*, God is so far from
 ' being unable to Declare future
 ' Events ; that he could not be God
 ' unless he did *fore-know* them.

From these *Premisses* I may very
 suitably conclude with the same
TULLY. *Sunt autem Dii, signifi-*
cant ergo. There is a God, *There-*
fore He hath revealed his Will to
 Mankind.

The Possibility of Divine Re-
 velation, in *Thesi*, being thus esta-
 blished ; let us next examin, in
Hypothesi, by what *Mediums* you
 can pretend to evince,

Secondly, That it is Impossible,
That these Books we call the Scriptures
should contain this Revelation of the
Divine Will. Or, That the Doctrines
therein expressed should proceed from
 God ;

*God; should be dictated by his Spirit,
or Published by his Command.*

Now there are but *Two Ways*;
whereby the proof of such Impos-
sibility can be attempted. Either,

1. It must appear, That the
Contents of this Book are unwor-
thy of such an excellent Author ;
and that the matters therein con-
tained, are inconsistent with that
due Notion of God, which even na-
tural Reason doth suggest; or else,

2. That the Penmen of these
Scriptures were Persons of such
slender Reputation, that we have
no reason to believe them, tho
they tell us expressly they received
this Book from God.

As to the *former* of these pre-
tences ; *Tolle, Lege.* Take this
Divine Book into your Hand ; But
do it without prejudice. Read it
with the same indifference you
would peruse any other Author,
and then resolve me. What Pas-
sage (either *Historical* or *Doftri-
nal*) can you find in this sacred Vo-
lume, which doth in the least con-
tra-

tradict, either the *Holiness, Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Truth*, or any other of the Divine Attributes? If you affirm, that there is some such Passage, and that there are such Contradictions; When you have first produced them, and told us what they are; I shall then, through Divine Assistance, endeavour your Satisfaction.

As to the 21, viz. *The Credit of the Penmen*; The utmost that can be urged against their *Authority* is this. [*That there being many Cheats and Impostors in the World, 'tis the Character of true Wisdom not to be over-credulous. And therefore tho we read expressly in the Bible, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, And Holy Men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: Yet this (saith the Deist) is but the Testimony of Men in their own Cause: Who are indeed to be admitted, as very faithful Witnesses, if we may believe themselves, and must take their own Words.*]

For

For the true State of the matter, according to his Sense is this. [*The Writers of these Books to support their Credit, and to raise themselves a Name (as Mahomet from his Pigeon, and Numa Pompilius from his Egeria) have counterfeited a Divine Commission, and delivered their Message in the Name of the Lord.*]

To which malicious Suggestion, I shall return this brief and, I hope, full Reply.

The highest Evidence of Divine Authority, is the Concurrence of Divine Power, i. e. The utmost assurance which can be given by any Person, that he acts by a Divine Commission, and that the Message he delivers was received from God: It is the working of such Miracles, in Confirmation of his Doctrine, as are beyond the Power of any natural Agent.

Now *Jesus of Nazareth*, the Author of the *Christian Faith*, most expressly assures us, That the Doctrines he deliver'd were receiv'd
from

from God. *My Doctrine is not mine, but*
Job. 7. 16. his that sent me. I
12. 49, 50. have not spoken of my
self, but the Father that sent me,
he gave me a Commandment what I
should say, and what I should speak.
Whatsoever I speak therefore even as
the Father said unto me, so I speak.

And because it might seem unreasonable, to believe him herein upon his own word; he makes

this plain Confession.
Job. 5. 31. on. If I bear Witness
of my self, my
Witness is not true, i. e. If I only
bear Witness of my self, my Witness
is not effective, or convincingly
true. There is ano-

V. 32, 33. ther that beareth Wit-
34, 36. ness of me : Ye sent
unto John, and he bare

Witness unto the Truth. But I re-
ceive not Testimony from Man, i. e.
only from Man. I have greater
Witness then that of John : For the
Works which the Father hath given
me to finish, the same Works that I
do,

do, bear Witness of me, that
 the Father hath sent me. *Joh. 10.*
 And when the Jews 24, 25.
 came round about him,
 and said unto him, How long dost thou
 make us to doubt? If thou be the
 Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answer-
 ed them, I told you, and ye believed
 not: The Works that I do in my Fa-
 thers Name, they bear Witness of me.

What these Works are, the E-
 vangeliſts have largely Recorded.
 Some of them are briefly repeated
 by our Lord himself, in his An-
 ſwer to *Joh's* Disci-
 ples. — *The Blind Luk 7. 22.*
ſee, the Lame walk, the

Deaf hear, the Dead are raiſed. By
 ſuch miraculous Works as theſe,
 our *Bleſſed Saviour* doth juſtifie his
 Commiſſion, That he was the *Meſ-
 ſias*, i. e. that he was that Perſon
 who was ſent from God; to Pub-
 liſh, to Purchase, to effect the
 Salvation of Mankind.

Theſe were the *Credentials* of
 this Heavenly Agent: The Divine
 Seal to his Commiſſion, which
 made

made it *Authentic*. Which unless he had produced, he could not rationally have challenged any acceptance from the

Joh. 10. 37. World. If I do not the Works of my Father (i. e. Works only imputable to Gods extraordinary Power)

Believe me not. If I -- 15. 24. had not done among them; the Works which none other Man did, they (the incredulous Jews) had not had Sin: i. e. had not been culpable for Unbelief. Intimating plainly; That if he had not confirmed his Doctrin with such convincing Miracles, they were not to be blamed, tho they did reject him as an Impostor.

But still you will say, [*The Question is de facto, How can I be assured that such Miracles were really done by him? Had I lived in those Days, and seen any of his Miracles, I should then have known how to have judged of them. But to tell me of Things done Sixteen Hundred Years ago,*

ago, is not much to the purpose. There hath been Fugling and Collusion in other Cases; and for ought I know, there hath been in this.]

To satisfy which trifling Scruple, give me leave with some freedom thus to express my self. That if Men will turn perfect *Sceptics*; and Causelessly suspect the Truth of all such Passages, as they did not actually see done with their own *Eyes*, or hear with their own *Ears*, they are not worthy of Conviction. And if this be your Temper, we must then *Turn you to Grass*, and there leave you. But if there is such a thing as *Fides historica*; or any assurance can be had of those Transactions, which are beyond and above our own Times, there may then be given as great evidence of these Miracles, as any matter of Fact is capable to admit. For, *These things were not done in a Corner*; but plainly and openly, and in the sight of many Witnesses; and with such remarkable Circumstances, as
might

might best expose them to the strictest Examination.

To omit many others, pray read the Stories of

(a) *Luk. 8.* (a) *Fairus* Daughter,
 (b) *Luk. 7.* (b) *Widows* Son of *Nain*, and of
 (c) *Joh. 11.* (c) *Lazarus*. The last of which (*viz. Lazarus*) had been Dead four Days, and Buried till he stank, and yet at the call of *Jesus* (although bound Hand and Foot with Grave-Cloths) he came forth, all the Multitude beholding.

This last Miracle was so eminently convincing, and did so startle the Chief Priests and Pharisees; that they called a Council upon it, and said, *What do we?*

Joh. 11. For this Man doth many
 47, 48. Miracles. If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him.

[All this, saith the Deist, were evidently true, and must needs be granted, if we had not just cause to suspect your Proof. You tell us indeed

deed that Jesus did such and such *Miracles*; particularly, That he raised the Dead. But pray who are they that report these Things? Were they not his own *Disciples* and *Followers*? And have we not great reason to suspect, they might forge these *Stories* for the *Credit* of their *Master*?]

In Answer to which *Cavil* (because *Objections* are endless) we shall put the Matter upon this short Issue.

These Writers do tell us ; That *Jesus* did not only raise others from the Dead ; but also that he raised himself. Yea, further they acquaint us, That before he *Died*, he promised his *Apostles* that he would rise again. And moreover gave this also as a *Sign* to all the People, whereby they should know ; That his *Doctrin* was true, and that he was sent from God. If therefore I can evidently prove to you, That *Jesus* of *Nazareth* did rise again from the Dead, and consequently ; That the *Penmen* of the *New-Testament* did herein de-

declare nothing but Truth ; you will then have no reason to suspect their Fidelity in any other Instance.

Now in order to your Conviction (which is most heartily prayed for) I must desire you to grant me this *Postulatum*, viz.

That the Resurrection of Jesus is Matter of Fact. And consequently can no otherwise be proved, then Matters of Fact use to be.

When we design to convince another, that such a Thing was *Done*, the surest Evidence we can give him, is the *Testimony* of sufficient credible Witnesses who saw it done. And he who is not satisfied with such a Proof, we look upon him as a Person not fit to be Discoursed with.

Now there was never any Matter of Fact, better or more strongly attested, then the Truth of this Assertion ; *That Jesus rose from the Dead.* And that, Whether we consider the *Nature* of the Things to be attested ; Or the
Number

Number and Quality of the Witnesses attesting.

First ; The thing to be attested was of that Nature. that it might be fully perceived by those who saw it ; *i. e.* It was an *Object* fit and proper to be judged of by their Senses.

As to the Death and Passion of Jesus (the necessary *Antecedents* of his Resurrection) they were plain *Objects* of Sense : Done in the presence of the whole City of *Jerusalem*, and consequently of his greatest Adversaries. That he truly Died, all the World could testify. No Mans Death was ever more solemn or remarkable : Nor was this ever disputed. So that thus far we are fixt and certain ; That if *Jesus* did rise again : his Resurrection was no *juggling Trick*, but a real Miracle.

After his *Resurrection*. those to whom he appeared were frightened at it, supposing him to be a *Spirit*. But he sufficiently assures them of the contrary by appealing
ing

ing to their Senses.

Luk. 24. 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I my self. Handle me and see, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have. q. d. Satisfie your selves, that it is I the same who was Dead, that am now alive again. But,

Secondly ; Not only the nature of the Thing (of which even our Senses are competent Judges) but also the Witnesses attesting do sufficiently prove; That Jesus is risen.

Now there are *Two* Things must concur to make a credible Witness. *Knowledge* and *Integrity*.

1. *Knowledge*. No Man ought to be received as a fit Witness in any Matter, unless it do appear ; that he had the opportunity fully to inform himself of the truth of that which he pretends to attest.

Should any Man affirm ; That he saw a Thing done, or heard a Word spoken ; and yet it shall be Deposed, by as credible Witnesses

as himself, that he was at the same time *Twenty Miles* distant ; Such *Evidence*, however confidently delivered, must needs be false and ridiculous.

But now the Disciples of our Lord had all imaginable advantages, to know the Truth of what they Witness; whilst they affirm ; *That Jesus is risen.*

They were his constant Followers and Attendants. And for the space of *Three Years*, were the daily Observers of his Conversation. And 'tis worthy your notice; That when by the *Apostacy* of *Judas*, they wanted one of their Number ; they were very careful to choose such a one to succeed him, as had been a constant Follower of *Jesus*, and had taken exact notice of every thing they were to Witness.

Wherefore (saith St. *Acts* 1. 21, *Peter*) of these Men 22, 23.

which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us; beginning

glnning from the Baptism of John unto that same Day, that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a Witness with us of his Resurrection.

Observe here how exact they were in their Choice. They would admit of none, but one who had been with them from first to last. That could speak Things (as we phrase it) not by *Hearsay* only, but of his own knowledge: That if any Man should ask him: Did you your self *See*? Or, Did you your self *Hear*, this, which you do report? That he might then truly answer that he did; and that what he Preached was upon his own certain Knowledge.

Now the Disciples of our Lord were the constant Hearers of his Doctrine; and amongst other Passages they heard him expressly Declare: That he would rise again the Third Day.

Joh. 2. 19, 21. Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up. But he spake of

of the Temple of his Body. And this Expression of rising the *Third Day* was so familiar, and so often repeated; that the *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees* took notice of it to *Pilate*, *Mat. 27.* saying, *Sir, we remember that that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three Days I will rise again.* 63.

Moreover, The Disciples and Followers of our Lord, were not only instructed in his *Life time*, that he would rise again; but they likewise saw him after he was risen. And in such a manner, with such Circumstances, as might most effectually command their Belief.

They saw him, not only once or twice, but several times. They saw him, not only singly and apart, and in lesser Numbers; but all of them, yea *Five Hundred* of them at once. And therefore tho *One* or *Two* might perhaps be mistaken; yet so great a Number could not possibly be imposed on.

Especially, when we have con-

sider

sider'd further ; That they not only saw him, but had likewise all other imaginable Evidences to convince them.

For when he had appeared to them, and Discourfed with them, which might also be done by a *Spirit* ; to give them a certain proof that he was no Spirit ; *Handle me and see (i.e. observe and fatisfie your felves) for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones as you fee me have.* And leaft they might yet fcruple, that it was not the fame Jesus that was crucified, but fome other Dead Body ; which, being moved and actuated by an Angel, did take his fhape and appear in his likenefs : To remove this doubt ; *Behold (faith he) my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my felf.* Thofe Hands and Feet which were pierced with Nails, and faftned to the accursed Tree. And if you will not believe your *Eyes* (which, according to the Vulgar Notion, may have a Mift caft before them) then to fatisfie your felves further, take the proof
of

of another of your Senses. *Handle me and see.* And when St. Thomas was a little more distrustful then the rest. *Reach hither thy Finger, and Job. 20. 27. behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing.*

Now recollect the forementioned Passages, and then resolve me; What could have been further either said or done to convince them, *That Jesus was risen?* They saw him, he discoursed with them, did eat before them, they touched him and handled him. And all this variety of Conversation they had with him, not only once or twice, but for the space of Forty Days together.

The Premisses considered, you must needs grant; That the *Apostles* were very sufficient Witnesses of our Blessed Saviours Resurrection in respect of their Knowledge. *i. e. They had all imaginable advantages, to know the Truth*
of

of that which they witnessed and attested. But,

2. Supposing their Knowledge ; And that they had sufficient means of Information ; yet whether were they Persons of that *Honesty* and *Integrity* as to be Believed ; Or, was there not just reason to suspect, that they might deliver a Falshood instead of Truth ?

And for this, let me desire you to consider that known Saying, *Nemo gratis malus est*. There is scarce any Man so absurd, as to be a *Villain* for nothing. Or so impertinently Wicked, as to do mischief for mischiefs sake. Whoever therefore shall presume publicly and solemnly to deliver a False Testimony ; he must be supposed to do it upon some urging Cause. As, *To raise himself a Name : To please a Party ; To advance his Fortunes : Or to gratifie a Revenge.*

Now, *All that is*
1 Joh. 2. 16. in the World (saith
St. John) is the
Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the
Eye,

Eye, and the Pride of Life. And whatever the Apostles could propose to themselves, it will be comprehended under one of these Three. *Honors, Riches, or Pleasures.*

1. As to *Honour*; They could not expect it, since all Dignities and Promotions were then in the Hands of *Jews or Pagans*: From whom they received nothing but ignominy and reproach. And by whom they were accounted *the Dung of the Earth, and the Off-scouring of the World.*

2. As to *Riches*. Instead of gaining an Estate, they were forced to part with all that they had. Either by a voluntary Resignation to supply the wants of others (for at first *they had all Things common*) or else by the fraud and rapine of their Oppressors. They no sooner came to *one City*, but they were Persecuted, and forced to *fly unto another*. And by this ambulatory Kind of Life, without any fixt certain *Being*, they were so far from being able (had they otherwise designed it)

it) to have raised Estates and Fortunes; that they lived upon the Alms and Charity of others. And then,

3. What kind of Pleasures they were to expect as their Master did foretel, so they themselves did sufficiently experi-

Joh. 16. 33. ence. *In the World ye shall have Tribu-*

Luk. 21. 12, lation. *They shall*
16, 17. *lay their Hands on*

you, and persecute you, and ye shall be betrayed both by Parents and Brethren, and Kinsfolks, and Friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to Death, and ye shall be hated of all

Joh. 16. 2. *Men for my Name sake, Yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God Service.*

St. Paul informs
1 Cor. 4. 9. us, *That God had set forth the Apostles as appointed unto Death, and exposed them as Spectacles of scorn and obloquy to the World. According to*

to which it did in effect happen to them. *Even V. 11. to this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling Place; being reviled we bl-ss. being persecuted we suffer it, being d-famed we intreat; we are made as the filth of the World, and as the Off-scouring of all things unto this day.*

In short, If Contumelies and Reproaches, if Racks and Prisons, if Flames & Gibbets, with other the most exquisite tormenting Deaths; if these be *Pleasures*, then indeed the *Apostles* and followers of our Lord, who witnessed his Resurrection, had their share of *Pleasures*.

And now Sir, having seriously Debated these Things, pray resolve me; What just cause can be assigned, why Persons of sober rational Deportment (having the same Principle of *Self-preservation* with other Men) should, by Publishing *Christ's Resurrection*, not only deprive themselves of all
com-

comfortable enjoyments, but also submit to the greatest Severities, and at last Death it self? I say, what cause can be assigned of such *Self-denial*, if they had not the highest Convictions of the Truth of what they Published?

But yet further. If the *Apostles* of our *Lord* were such Cheats and Impostors why were they not discovered, and exposed as such? If the *Resurrection* of *Jesus* was no better than a Legendary Story, and a *cunningly devised Fable*, why was it not then confuted? The World at that time abounded with Learned Men, both *Jews* and *Heathens*; who wanted neither *Wit* nor *Malice* for such an Undertaking. Why were not their *Pens* sharpened as well as their *Swords*? The Reason is evident. There were then such *Authentic Records* of these matters, as could not be Disputed. The

(1) Euseb. Hist.
L. 1. c. 9.

(b) Apol. 2.
pag. 76.

(1) *True Acta
Pilati* (to which
(b) *Justin Martyr*,
and

and (c) *Tertullian* so successfully appeared) were then extant. And these were such irrefragable Proofs, that Malice it self was not able to hiss against them.

(c) *Apol. c. 5. p. 6, &c. ana c. 21. p. 23. V. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 2. c. 2. p. 40. V. Not. Val.*

There was indeed a very early, tho ridiculous, Attempt to stifle this Truth. The Chief Priests and Pharisees having heard him say, while he was yet alive, *After three Days, I will rise again*; They not only Sealed up the *Sepulchre*, but also procured a Guard of Sculdiers to watch it. That if any report were made of his Resurrection, they might then effectually disprove it by producing his *Body*; which for that end, they had now got into their own Possession.

But observe the Malice of these Men; not to be convinced; no, not by a *Miracle*. For being told by the *Watch* (with the greatest
Con-

Consternation) that an *Angel* had appeared ; that the *Stone* was rolled away ; and the *Body* was gone : They then hired these *Soldiers* to

report ; *That his*
Mat. 28. 13. Disciples came by
Night and stole him
away whilst they slept. What ! All
of them slept ? No *Sentinel* to
watch for the rest ? This was such
an extravagant *Un-soldier-like* Al-
legation, that nothing but the
Impudence of a *Few*, could have
imposed upon the *World*.

From these *Premises*, I hope it
hath been competently proved.

1. That it is very possible, *That*
God should Reveal his Will to Man-
kind. And,

2. It is no less possible ; *that*
those Books we call the Scriptures,
should contain this Revelation of the
Divine Will. And therefore,

3. If (these *Two* Propositions be-
ing granted) you can still be so ex-
travagant as to affirm ; *The Impos-*
sibility of Eternal Torments ; You
must then prove it Impossible ;
That

That any such Doctrin, concerning the Existence or Eternity of Hell Torments, should be revealed in Scripture. Or else,

4. You must prove; *That what God hath Revealed in Scripture cannot possibly be true.*

As to this *Fourth* Proposition; I should but trifle to expostulate it with you, *Truth* being such an Essential Attribute of God, that it never was Disputed. If therefore God hath made this Revelation; There is a Hell, and the Torments of it are Eternal: *Who art thou, O vain Man, that disputest against God; Let God be true, but every Man a Lyar.* And then the only Proposition for me to confirm, and you to disprove is this; *It is very possible that the Holy Scriptures do reveal this Doctrin, viz. That there is a Hell, and that the Torments of it are Eternal.*

For if this be *Impossible*; pray then inform us, what is the true sense and meaning of these following Words?

(a) *The Angels which kept not their first Estate, (a) Jude 6. but left their own Habitation, he hath reserved in Everlasting Chains under darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day.*

(b) *When the Lord (b) 2 Thes. 1. 7; Jesus shall be revealed 8, 9. from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking*

king vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with Everlasting Destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power. (c)

(c) John. 5. Marvel not at this : For 28, 29. the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation.

(d) Dan. 12. 2. on. (d) And many of them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to Everlasting Life, and some to shame, and Everlasting Con-

(e) Mat. 25. 41. tempt. (e) Then shall he say unto them on the left Hand; Depart from me, ye Cursed into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his An-

(f) Mat. 25. 46. gels. (f) And these shall go away into Everlasting punishment: But the Righteous into Life Eternal (g) At the

(g) Mat. 13. end of the World, the 49, 50. Angels shall come forth, and sever the Wicked

from among the Just; and shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth.

(h) If thy hand offend (h) Mark. 9.
thee, cut it off: It is 43, 44.

better for thee to enter into life maimed, then having two hands, to go into Hell, into the Fire that never shall be touched: Where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is

not quenched. (i) The (i) Rev. 20. 10.
Least and the False

Prophet shall be Tormented Day and Night, for ever and

ever. (k) Be not a- (k) Luk. 12. 4, 5.
fraid of them that

kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath Power to cast into Hell; yea I say unto you, fear him.

And now Sir, having seriously perused these Places of Scripture, pray resolve me. Are not these following Truths as plainly therein delivered, as any words can express them?

1. That wicked Men are liable to a further Punishment after Death. Those that kill the Body, are not able to kill the Soul. But God is able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell, i. e. (as St. Luke interprets St. Matthew) to cast them into Hell.

2. This Punishment is very great and dreadful. 'Tis represented by Fire (the most smart and pungent Torment) and
by

by *wailing* and *gnashing of Teeth*, out of Anguish and Despair,

3 *These Torments are Eternal. Everlasting Punishment. Everlasting Fire. Never shall be quenched. Their Worm dieth not.*

There are indeed some impertinent *Criticisms*, urged by the *Socinians* and others, to *enervate* these *Texts*. But what then? Was there ever any Truth so certain which hath not bin Disputed:

But what if these *Critics* are mistaken? what if wiser Men then *they* have thought otherwise? Pray then do not hazard an Eternal Concern upon such Niceties.

I did once think to have expostulated these Things largely with you And to have done it with all the warmth and vigour, that the Concern for a precious immortal Soul could dictate. But I must remember to whom I write. For unless your Judgment is rectified, the best things I can say will be but matter for your Sport. If the *Word of God* shall still be *Burlesqued*, and Ridiculed by you; I have no reason to expect any great Reverence should be shewed to mine. But I hope better Things, and Things that accompany Salvation tho I thus speak.

God Grant that you may in this your Day, consider the Things that belong to your Peace, before they be hid from your Eyes.

F I N I S.

